000 Our backs ache. Our whole body aches. By the afternoon we are all a bit dizzy. This is the reason why we should like to put on some more weight.

And naturally we are constantly hungry. Our muscles hurt, the sweat runs down in rivulets and carves little sun-scorched ravines on the back of our necks.

Of course most of us are not aware that the aching of our bodies and the emptiness of our bellies is something peculiar. We have been used to this for thousands of years. We only start thinking about it now that we talk about it, you understand.

512 Well, our days are not very interesting. From dawn till dusk we work in the fields.

Then we go home, to tend the cattle, to clean and feed, to store away and to prepare. Our work is less in winter. Then the animals have to be fed only twice a day; in summer three times.

This work in the stables generally begins at seven in the evening; in winter sometimes earlier. Then the estate management allots the work for the next day. We wait for our orders, and when we have got them we go slowly back to our huts behind the stables.

[461] We are slow. We are tired and ill. We generally work, as you have seen, from two or three in the morning till nine or ten at night. According to the laws now regulating our lives, we have no holidays. If you work about eighteen hours a day, seven days a week; if you work always, year in, year out—well, then you become like us: slow and tired.

The work of the *csiras*—those who tend the cows—is the hardest. Generally, after four years, hard work, and the heavy manure-atmosphere of the stables, destroy the lungs of the *csiras*. If a *csiras* is lucky, he gets away before he starts to spit blood. But many stay, become wrecks, and go to the villages to live by begging.

•627 Our lords, the estate-managers and their assistants, when they curse us, say that we are like animals. They treat us as such. According to a new law we are not supposed to be given corporal punishment above the age of eighteen. According to the law, the estate servants between twelve and eighteen may be hit, but in such a way "as not to cause a wound which does not heal within eight days". We have the right to go to the village doctor and get a document stating that we have received a wound which will not heal in eight days. But the village is far away, and we are not permitted to leave the estate—save, on some estates, on every second Sunday, when we have the morning off for church. So this law about a wound caused by corporal punishment does not help us much.

And of course we are often hit and kicked, even if we are over eighteen. Men over thirty-five are generally not hit in the face —they just get an occasional hit with the whip. In some districts it is considered a very grave thing to be struck with a whip or stick. In those districts we don't mind the kicks and hits in the face, which belong to the daily routine, but we do not permit ourselves to be whipped.

To you it probably seems very extraordinary, this being hit. To us it is not. We are hit by our parents, at school, in the army, of course, where the sergeants kick our behinds; the gendarmes hit us in the face if there is trouble with us and the estate-management staff always hit us.

The *csiras*, for instance, who mostly sleep in the stables beside the cows, are awakened by a kick. True, they would not move without being kicked. They don't think this extraordinary. They are used to handling the cattle, and the cattle have to be prodded by kicks and hits.

Well, when the day's work is over—when our lords have told the gardeners, shepherds, field-labourers, cart-drivers what to do next day, they, of course, standing at attention—then we are free till next dawn.

Then we clean ourselves. At dawn we don't bother. Would you? Would you if you knew that, immediately after, you will have to work with the cattle, with manure, in the fields, in the dust? Anyhow, we clean ourselves and prepare for our dinner, when we always eat something warm, not only pretend to do so.

We eat some soup. The soup is generally made by throwing a few pieces of potatoes into boiling water. A few onions and a little lard make a delicious soup. In harder times the soup is naturally thinner. Not everybody likes our soups. Once a lady visited us from the manor and tasted the soup. She spat it out, and said it tasted like dish-water. We like it. Sometimes we can eat our favourite dish, which is made of a mixture of wheat and potatoes, with a little yeast, and boiled in water. We very rarely eat meat. At weddings and funerals we manage to eat meat, because it would be a great shame to get married or die without a feast of meat and wine.

Then—after dinner—we live our private lives. We sit in front of our huts and talk. In the winter we sit inside. Sometimes we gather in one of the huts to read. We know how to read and write. We go to schools, which are very far away. The children walk in most cases ten miles to and from the schools every day. But they like to do it. And we like to read. We don't read newspapers, for we have not got the money. But we read books,